

# Training 1-1:

## General School Requirements



In this training, we will refer to the Private School Choice Programs (PSCP) as “Choice” or “Choice program” throughout this training. The Choice program is governed by Wis. Stat. §§ 119.23 and 118.60, as well as Wis. Admin. Codes ch. PI 35 and 48. Provisions of this training module are subject to statutory and rule changes.

This training module will discuss general private school requirements for schools participating in the Choice program.

## Private School Choice Programs (PSCP) and Statutes

- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP)
  - Wis. Stat. § 119.23, Wis. Admin. Code § PI 35
- Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) & Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP)
  - Wis. Stat. § 118.60, Wis. Admin. Code § PI 48
- Collectively referred to as the PSCP
- The following slides will briefly highlight some general school requirements for the PSCP.

There are three programs that are collectively referred to as Private School Choice Programs, and they are the:

Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), *for the residents of the City of Milwaukee,*

Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) *for the residents of the Racine Unified School District,* and the

Wisconsin Parental choice programs (WPCP) *for all residents outside the City of Milwaukee and Racine Unified School District.*

Schools participating in the program receive a state aid payment for each eligible student on behalf of the student's parent or guardian.

A link to the statutes and administrative rules can be accessed on the Choice website at [dpi.wi.gov/choice](http://dpi.wi.gov/choice) and from the Training Resource Slide at the end of this presentation. We invite you to review and become familiar with the rules and statutes governing these programs.

# Definition of a Private School

A private school is defined by [Wis. Stat. § 118.165 \(1\)](#):

- Primary purpose of program is to provide private or religious-based instruction.
- Program is privately controlled.
- Program is not operated for the purpose of avoiding or circumventing the compulsory school attendance requirement.
- Program provides at least 875 hours of instruction each school year\*.

\*Schools participating in the PSCP have additional hours of instruction requirements. For more information about these requirements, please see [Training 3-1: Reporting Hours of Instruction](#).

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To be in the Choice program, a private school must satisfy the definition of a private school in Wisconsin. Wis. Statute § 118.165(1) defines a private school.

A private school is:

- 1) Where the primary purpose of your program is to provide private or religious based instruction,
- 2) Is privately controlled,
- 3) Not operated for the purpose of avoiding or circumventing the compulsory school attendance requirement, and a
- 4) Private schools must provide 875 hours of instruction\*.

\*Schools participating in the PSCP have additional hours of instruction requirements. For more information about these requirements, please see Training 3-1: Reporting Hours of Instruction.

## Definition of a Private School (continued)


- If a school provides boarding for pupils at the institution, the pupils must return annually to their home for not less than 2 months of summer vacation, unless the institution is licensed as a child welfare agency.
- Additionally, the school's educational program must provide a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and health.

Additionally, Wis. Statute § 118.165(1) states that pupils at the private school must return home for at least 2 months of summer vacation, if the school provides boarding. This excludes year-round schools that are licensed as child welfare agencies.

All private schools in Wisconsin must provide a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science and health. Schools may also provide instruction in other areas.

## Private School Report PI-1207

- All private schools are required to [electronically](#) file this report, which can be accessed from WISEhome.
- The report requires school information, enrollments, and self-verification that the school meets the definition of a private school.
- This is due on or before October 15 each year.



All private schools in Wisconsin annually file the PI-1207 private school report. This is filed electronically by October 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

The PI-1207 is where the DPI asks for information about the school's program, enrollments, and asks for self-verification that the school meets the definition of a private school.

## Definition of “New School”

If the school:

- 1) Has been open for **less than** 12 months, or
- 2) Has fewer than 40 students in 2 or fewer grade levels

The school is considered a *new* school and is required to meet additional requirements a year before it can participate in the choice program.

However, a new school is not subject to these [additional requirements](#) if it is operated by a governing board that operates a private school that is currently participating in the choice program.

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If a private school has been open for less than 12 months or has fewer than 40 students in 2 or fewer grade levels, the school is considered a new school and is required to meet additional requirements and separate deadlines before the school will be allowed to participate in and offer the choice program at the school.

# Health and Safety Requirements

- All Choice schools must comply with all health and safety laws or codes that apply to public schools. Please see [Wis. Stat. s. 118.07](#) for information about some of these requirements.
- These include the requirement to train all staff in the mandated reporting of child abuse and neglect, and in the laws governing the threat of violence, using training materials provided by DPI. All school employees must receive this training once within the first six months after hire and at least every 5 years thereafter. For more information on the child abuse and neglect training requirement, see the [Child Abuse and Neglect Training](#) webpage. The online learning module related to reporting of threats of violence is available on the [Required Training for Wisconsin School Staff](#) webpage.
- All Choice schools must meet program insurance coverage requirements and must meet building code requirements.

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Schools participating in the Choice program must have insurance coverage and meet all building code requirements. Insurance requirements are covered more in depth in Training 6 and minimum insurance requirements are posted on our web page. The Insurance Requirements document may be accessed via the links on the Training Resource slide at the end of this training. We recommend you give a copy of the insurance requirements to your insurance agent and get a quote. You will need the cost of the insurance when you prepare your budget. New schools will provide proof of insurance to DPI by August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Schools that do not meet this requirement cannot participate in the Choice Program for the entire school year.



## Certificate of Occupancy

Schools participating in Choice Programs must provide the following:

- One of the following for all buildings if the school is participating in the MPCP and for any buildings located in the Racine Unified School District for WPCP and RPCP schools:
  - i. A certificate of occupancy from the municipality within which the private school is located; or
  - ii. A certificate of occupancy from a local or regional unit who has the authority to issue certificates of occupancy; or
  - iii. If the municipality and/or regional unit does not issue certificates of occupancy, then submit a letter from the municipality within which the school is located explaining that the municipality does not issue certificates of occupancy.

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Schools participating in a choice program must check the requirement for a Certificate of Occupancy. The requirement varies depending on what program(s) the school is participating in.

**All** schools participating in the MPCP, *regardless of a building's location*, and RPCP and WPCP schools that have buildings *located in the Racine Unified School District* must provide either a certificate of occupancy issued by the municipality within which the private school is located, or

A certificate of occupancy from a local or regional unit who has the authority to issue certificates or occupancy, or

If the municipality and/or regional unit does not issue certificates of occupancy, then submit a letter from the municipality within which the school is located explaining that the municipality does not issue certificates of occupancy.

## Certificate of Occupancy – Moving/Adding a New Location or Changing School Name

- If a school changes its name, moves to a new location, or opens a new facility a new certificate must be obtained.
- Subsequent permits for occupancy must be on file with the DPI **prior to student attendance.**
- The permit must indicate for school use (not church or daycare).
- **A temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

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**Be sure you have the final occupancy permit before you use the building.**

If a school moves to a new location, changes name, or opens a new facility, a new certificate must be obtained. The school needs certificates for all school locations, and the certificate must say it is for “use as a school.”

A permit must be on file with DPI before the school may use the building for students. A temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.

## Certificate of Occupancy – Requirements for Schools New to the MPCP

- **All MPCP schools** must file a copy of the school's FINAL certificate of occupancy and capacity placard (if available):
  - By May 1 if offering summer school; or
  - By August 1 if not offering summer school.
- **A temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

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A final Certificate of Occupancy must be received by DPI no later than August 1. If the school offers summer school, the permit is due May 1.

Keep in mind a **temporary certificate does not satisfy this requirement** and your school will not be permitted to participate in the Choice programs.

## **Certificate of Occupancy - Requirements for Schools New to the RPCP and WPCP**

- **Certificates of Occupancy are required for any buildings located within the boundaries of the Racine Unified School District**
- **Must file a copy of the school's FINAL certificate of occupancy and capacity placard:**
  - By May 1, if offering summer school, or
  - By August 1, if not offering summer school.
- **A temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

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If the school building is within the boundaries of the Racine Unified School District, you must provide a copy of the final certificate of occupancy and capacity placard (if available) to DPI. This requirement applies to schools participating in the RPCP or the WPCP.

New schools must provide the certificate no later than August 1. If you are offering summer school, the certificate is due to DPI by May 1.

**A temporary certificate of occupancy will not meet this requirement.**

# Summer School

## Choice school requirements:

- Offer a minimum of 19 days of pupil instruction during their summer school term;
- Provide a minimum of 270 minutes of non-Title I pupil instruction per summer school day.

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Choice schools may offer summer school. To receive payment for eligible choice students, a Choice school must follow the requirements on the slide. The school indicates its intention to offer summer school to eligible choice students when the school annually registers its intent to participate by January 10.

If the school is considered a new private school, the school will have to meet deadlines by the August 1 of the year prior to the first school year the school intends to participate to be eligible to participate in the Choice programs. New schools should communicate their intent to offer summer school to us as soon as possible.

## Religious Activities

- Religious Activities:
  - A private school may not require a choice student to participate in any religious activities if the student's parent or guardian submits a written request that the student be exempt from such activities.
  - Failure to meet this requirement could result in termination from the program and withholding of program payments.

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Many schools in the Parental Choice program have religious activities and instruction. If a parent submits a written request, the parent may opt their student out of religious activities and graduation requirements that include religious instruction or activities at your school. The school must provide alternate instruction for the student and the student may not be required to participate in any religious activity.

# Accreditation Process

Schools wishing to participate in the Choice programs must either be fully accredited or go through an accreditation process to become fully accredited. Schools fully accredited by one of the accrediting entities listed in statute will provide proof of accreditation by the applicable deadline.

For schools that are not accredited, the process has three separate reporting requirements for:

- 1) Pre-accreditation
- 2) Applying for Accreditation
- 3) Receiving Accreditation

We'll cover each requirement in the following slides.

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For information on the pre-accreditation and accreditation requirements please refer to the Accreditation Bulletin. A link to this bulletin is located on the Training Resources slide at end of this training.

## Pre-Accreditation

- Prior to participating in the Choice program, schools that are not fully accredited are required to obtain pre-accreditation by **August 1 \*** of the first year it is participating (or by **May 1 \*** if it is offering summer school).
- A school that fails to meet this requirement is not eligible participate in the Choice program(s).

\* Schools considered “New” would have needed to provide proof of pre-accreditation by December 15<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to the schools’ first year participating in the Choice program(s).

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Schools participating in the Choice program must be pre-accredited by August 1 of it first year in the Choice program, unless fully accredited. If the school wishes to offer summer school, the school must be pre-accredited by May 1 unless fully accredited.

Schools considered “New” need to provide proof of pre-accreditation by December 15<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to the school’s first year participating in the program(s).

As noted earlier, schools may only apply to one pre-accrediting entity.



## Approved Pre-Accrediting Entities

- Institute for Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (no longer preaccrediting schools)
- Cognia
- Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation
- Independent Schools Association of the Central States
- Archdiocese or diocese within which the school is located
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation
- National Lutheran School Accreditation
- Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Christian Schools International
- Archdiocese or diocese within which the school is located

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The statutes list the organizations that may pre-accredit private schools that wish to participate in the choice program(s). However, not all these organizations may pre-accredit schools.

Contact the organization as soon as possible, since advanced planning is needed to complete the process. Remember you may only apply to one entity for pre-accreditation.

Please see the Accreditation Bulletin for additional information.

## Applying for Accreditation and Receiving Accreditation

### Pre-Accredited Schools (Not Yet Accredited):

- Must apply to receive accreditation by December 31 of the first year of participation in the Choice program; and
- Then the school has until December 31 of its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of participation to receive accreditation for all grades offered.

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**Pre-accredited schools** must provide proof to DPI of *an accepted application for accreditation* from one of the approved organizations no later than December 31 of the first year of participating in the choice program. Please see the following slide or Accreditation Bulletin for the approved list of accrediting entities that may grant accreditation. Links to the Accreditation bulletin are located on the Training Resources slide at the end.

The school then must be fully accredited by December 31 of its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of participation for all grades offered.

## Applying for Accreditation and Receiving Accreditation (continued)

- Schools that are not fully accredited must obtain preaccreditation before providing instruction in additional grades or in an additional or new location.
- If an accrediting organization determines during the preaccreditation process that a school does not meet the private school requirements, the organization must notify DPI.

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If a school is preaccredited and decides to add to its program (either new grades or a new or additional location), additional preaccreditation is required. Please see the Accreditation Bulletin for more detail.

The school's accrediting organization must report to DPI if the school no longer meet the requirements of a private school in Wisconsin. A school is ineligible to participate in the choice program if it fails to meet the preaccreditation requirements.

# Approved Accreditation Entities

- Cognia
- Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation
- Independent Schools Association of the Central States
- Archdiocese or diocese within which the school is located
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation
- National Lutheran School Accreditation
- Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Christian Schools International
- An organization recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation

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This is a list of the accrediting organizations listed in state statute that may accredit choice schools in Wisconsin.

# Continuous Accreditation

**All schools** that are **fully accredited** must maintain their accreditation.

Annually, by August 1, a notice from the school's accrediting agency must be provided to DPI confirming that the school remains accredited for the current school year. The notice must be dated after July 1 of the current school year, be completed by an authorized member of the accrediting entity, and include all the following information:

- The private school's name;
- The private school's address for each location included in the accreditation;
- The grades accredited;
- A statement that the school is or is not accredited as of the date of the notice;

Failure to maintain accreditation will result in the school being terminated from the choice program.

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When fully accredited, the governing body of each school annually must ensure the school maintains accreditation. Notification from the school's accrediting organization confirming that the school continues to be accredited is provided to DPI by August 1.

Failure to maintain accreditation will result in the school being terminated from the Choice program. The notification from the accreditation organization must contain certain information. **The notice must be dated after July 1 of the current school year, be completed by an authorized member of the accrediting entity, and include all the following information:**

The private school's name;

The private school's address for each location included in the accreditation;

The grades accredited;

A statement that the school is or is not accredited as of the date of the notice;

Your accrediting organization must report to DPI if you no longer meet the requirements of a private school in Wisconsin.

Failure to maintain continuous accreditation may result in the school's termination from the PSCP.

## Accreditation – Adding/Expanding Grade Offerings

Schools must be accredited for all grades offered at the school. If school is:

- Only accredited for elementary grades (K-8) and adding a new high school grade (9-12), it must apply for accreditation for the new grade by December 31 of the first year the school offers the new grade and be fully accredited for the grade by December 31 of the third year following the first year the grade is offered.
- Only accredited for high school grades (9-12) and adding a new elementary grade (K-8), it must apply for accreditation for the new grade by December 31 of the first year the school offers the new grade and be fully accredited for the grade by December 31 of the third year following the first year the grade is offered.
- Only accredited for elementary grades (K-8) and adding a new elementary grade or only accredited for high school grades (9-12) and adding a new high school grade, it must be accredited for the new grade no later than August 1 of the school year it is added.

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Schools that are fully accredited must be accredited for all the grades the school offers.

If a private school is accredited for only elementary grades (kindergarten through 8th grade) or only high school grades (9th through 12th) and plans to add additional grades, for example, an elementary school adding high school grades, the school then must apply for accreditation for the additional grades no later than December 31 of the first school year that the private school offers instruction in the nonaccredited grades. The school must send a letter to DPI no later than December 31 providing proof from an accrediting entity the school meets this requirement. The school then must achieve full accreditation by one of the approved accrediting entities prior to December 31 of the third year following the first school year the new grades are offered.

A school that is accredited only for elementary grades or only high school grades and plans to add an elementary grade or a high school grade must be accredited for the nonaccredited grade no later than August 1 of that school year. For example, an elementary school accredited for grades K-5 plans to add grade six in the next school year, the school must be fully accredited for grade 6 by August 1 of the school year grade 6 is offered.

Please see the Accreditation Bulletin for more detail. Links to the Accreditation bulletin are located on the Training Resources at the end.



## Accountability Report and Notifications

- Annually, each private school, must provide to the parent or guardian of each pupil enrolled in or attending the school:
  - A copy of the school's accountability report; and simultaneously,
  - A list of the [educational options](#) available to children who reside in the pupil's resident school district – including public school, choice schools, charter schools, virtual schools, full-time open enrollment, youth apprenticeship program, early college credit program (and Dual Enrollment), and options for pupils enrolled in a home-based private educational program.

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Wis. Statute sec. 115.385(2) requires Choice schools to provide parents with a copy of the school's accountability report and list of educational options available to that parent.

The Department of Public Instruction has a website (linked above) that includes links to all educational options available to Wisconsin parents.

## Adding a New Location

- If a school is adding a new location effective for the upcoming school year, the school may include the new location when submitting the Notice of Intent to Participate for that upcoming school year.
- If a school is adding a location during the current school year, the school must submit a School Information Update form, which is available on the [Choice Programs: School Submitted Reports and Forms](#) webpage.
- The school must also ensure applicable requirements related to certificate of occupancy, insurance coverage and fidelity bonds, and accreditation are met.

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- If a school is adding a new location effective for the upcoming school year, the school may include the new location when submitting the Notice of Intent to Participate for that upcoming school year.
- If a school is adding a location during the current school year, the school must submit a School Information Update form, which is available on the [Choice Programs: School Submitted Reports and Forms](#) webpage.
- The school must also ensure requirements described below are met.
  - If the school participates in the MPCP or the new location is in the Racine Unified School District for schools participating in the RPCP or WPCP, the school must meet certificate of occupancy requirements prior to students being present in the building. Schools not required to provide a certificate of occupancy to the DPI should check with their municipality to ensure the new school location meets applicable requirements.
  - Review the Insurance Coverage & Fidelity Bond Requirements bulletin, available on the [Choice Programs: DPI Bulletins](#) webpage, to insure applicable insurance requirements have been met.
  - Review the Accreditation Bulletin, available on the [Choice Programs: DPI Bulletins](#) webpage, to ensure applicable accreditation requirements have been met.

## Create an Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) Management Plan

- Each private school participating in the Choice program is required to develop and implement an IEQ management plan.
- Schools first participating in the Choice program are required to develop a plan by October 1 of their first year participating in Choice and implement the plan by the beginning of their second year participating.

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Each private school participating in the Choice program is required to develop and implementation of an IEQ management plan.

The law does not require use of any specific template or format for an IEQ Management Plan, but DPI does have a model management plan available that school may utilize. Schools are free to use the DPI template as a model, develop their own plans or adapt existing plans, procedure handbooks or policy documents to demonstrate compliance with the planning and implementation requirements.

To see DPI's Model Plan and to learn more about this requirement, please see the Indoor Environmental Quality Model Management Plan web page for more information: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/support/school-operations/facilities/indoor-environmental-quality-plan>.

## Additional Requirements

- Comply with federal provisions prohibiting discrimination based on race, color or national origin.
- Complete and file all required forms and reports by required deadlines.
- Failure to comply with the statutory requirements of the program could result in the withholding of choice payments or termination from the program.

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Federal law requires schools to comply with provisions that prohibit discrimination based on race, color or national origin.

Failure to comply with the statutory requirements of the program could result in the withholding of choice payments or termination from the program. We recommend schools review the Choice resources available, familiarize themselves with program requirements, and ensure they have a plan in place to meet those requirements.

Please also note that other programs the school opts to participate in may have additional requirements.

# Training and Program Resources

Please review the resources below for additional information about the Choice program.

In-depth trainings on various topics are available on the PSCP On-Demand Training webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/on-demand-training>

Informational Bulletins on various topics are available on the PSCP Bulletins webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/bulletins>:

Important Dates and Reminders are available on the PSCP School Information webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/school-information>

Statutes and Rules for the PSCP are available on this webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/statutes>

There are several training resources for schools available on the Choice Program website. These include:

In-depth trainings on specific topics.

Informational Bulletins on various topics.

Important Dates and Reminders.

The link to Statues and Rules for the PSCP.

We invite you to bookmark and review these additional resources and become familiar with the rules and statutes governing the Choice programs.

## Questions

Website: <https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/school-information>

Email: [privateschoolchoice@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:privateschoolchoice@dpi.wi.gov)

Phone: 1-888-245-2732 ext. 3



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If you have any questions about the information discussed in this training, please see the Private School Choice Programs homepage. The left menu bar of the Private School Choice Programs homepage has resources for both schools and families.

Choice schools may also contact the Choice team at [privateschoolchoice@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:privateschoolchoice@dpi.wi.gov) or call the toll-free number at 1-888-245-2732, extension 3 with questions.